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HANDLED WITH CARE

EGG PRODUCTS INSPECTION ACT

...to assure wholesome
eggs and egg products
in the marketplace...



HANDLED WITH CARE

The egg is versatile, nutritious, and superbly packaged by nature itself. But like all good things in packages, it must be handled with care in order to reach the user safely.

A program to assure wholesome shell eggs and egg products in the marketplace became mandatory in December 1970 when Congress passed the Egg Products Inspection Act. Administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service, this act imposes specific inspection requirements for two categories of eggs . . . egg products and shell eggs.

EGG PRODUCTS

Eggs appear in grocery carts in many ways other than in their familiar shells. Dried, liquid, and frozen eggs are important ingredients in a host of foods, including cake and pudding mixes, macaroni, ice cream, and bakery goods. Commercial food manufacturers and large-quantity food buyers usually prefer these egg products to shell eggs because they are more convenient and easier to handle.

Under the Egg Products Inspection Act, plants that break, dry, and process shell eggs into liquid, frozen, or dried egg products must operate under the continuous inspection program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

This means that an official inspector must be present at all times when eggs are being processed. Pasteurization is required for all egg products. The law applies to all egg-breaking plants, big and small, and to those selling products locally, across State lines, and in foreign commerce.

The law further stipulates that all users of processed egg products must obtain such products from plants operating under continuous inspection.

To be approved for official continuous inspection, egg products plants must apply for the service, submit blueprints of their plant, complete any necessary remodeling and equipment installation, submit labels, and have their water supply approved.

SHELL EGGS

Most eggs traded are bought and sold as "shell eggs"—that is, still in the shell. These eggs usually reach consumers through retail stores. Some food manufacturers, restaurants, and institutions also buy shell eggs.

Under the Egg Products Inspection Act, disposition of certain undesirable shell eggs is controlled to prevent their entering consumer food channels.

Shell eggs that are dirty, cracked, leaking, or that are in some other way unsuitable for human consumption, are called "restricted eggs." If they are totally unfit for human consumption, they must be destroyed or denatured. Dirties and checks (eggs with cracked shells but with contents that are not leaking) are fit for consumption when properly handled. These eggs must be shipped to officially inspected egg products processing plants for proper segregation and processing.

Several types of businesses that handle shell eggs must register with USDA. This group in-

cludes: all plants grading and packaging shell eggs for retail stores, restaurants, institutions, or food manufacturers; producer-packers with more than 3,000 hens who pack eggs for the ultimate consumer (households, retail stores, bakeries, institutions, restaurants, etc.); and hatcheries.

HOW COMPLIANCE IS ASSURED

The Egg Products Inspection Act gives enforcement authority to the U.S. Department of Agriculture and to the Food and Drug Administration of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Federal Agriculture officials or State officials acting on behalf of USDA visit egg packers and hatcheries at least every 3 months to see that they are complying with the law.

Since the law places responsibility for compliance on all handlers, firms who transport, ship, and receive shell eggs and egg products may also be checked periodically.

The Food and Drug Administration is responsible for visiting food manufacturing establishments, restaurants, and institutions, to make sure they are not using restricted shell eggs.



STANDARDS

In addition to requirements imposed on egg handlers and egg products processing plants, the Egg Products Inspection Act prohibits State and local governments from requiring standards for eggs moving in interstate commerce that are different from, or in addition to, official USDA standards for grade and size. Except for Hawaii, Alaska, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, State or local governments may not require that labels indicate the origin of shell eggs.

INFORMATION

For further information, assistance, application or registration forms, contact one of the regional poultry grading offices:

If you are in Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, or Wyoming:

Regional Poultry Grading Office
Room 777, New Federal Building
210 Walnut Street
Des Moines, Iowa 50309
Phone: (515) 284-4581

If you are in Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, or Wisconsin:

Regional Poultry Grading Office
Room 803, U.S. Custom House
610 S. Canal Street
Chicago, Illinois 60607
Phone: (312) 353-6226

If you are in Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey,



New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virgin Islands, Virginia, or West Virginia:

Regional Poultry Grading Office
1006 U.S. Custom House
2nd and Chestnut Streets
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106
Phone: (215) 597-4554

If you are in Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, or Washington:

Regional Poultry Grading Office
Room 807, U.S. Appraisers Bldg.
630 Sansome Street
San Francisco, California 94111
Phone: (415) 556-6488



Supersedes "The Egg Products Inspection Act in Brief,"
C&MS-87 and "Shell Eggs and the Egg Products Inspection
Act," C&MS-95